Documenting Ferguson: Capturing History as It Happens

Sonya Rooney  
*Washington University in St Louis*

Jennifer Kirmer  
*Washington University in St Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/lib_present](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/lib_present)

Part of the [African American Studies Commons](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/americanstudies), [Digital Humanities Commons](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/digitalhumanities), [Library and Information Science Commons](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/libraryinfo), [Public History Commons](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/publichistory), and the [United States History Commons](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/unitedstateshistory)

Recommended Citation

[https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/lib_present/14](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/lib_present/14)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Libraries Presentations by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.
Documenting Ferguson:
Capturing History as it Happens
Sonya Rooney, University Archivist, and Jennifer Kirmer, Digital Archivist

Formation and Beginnings
- On August 9, 2014, eighteen-year-old Michael Brown was killed by then police officer Darren Wilson in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, which sparked a variety of responses including memorials, community meetings, protests, and rallies which dominated the local and national media.
- Later in August, with the direction from Washington University Librarian, Jeffrey Trzeciak, the Documenting Ferguson Team was formed to capture history as it happened.
- Participants were using social media and mobile devices to organize events as well as document them. The team needed to find a way to collect and preserve born digital files captured on these types of temporal media.

Committee Members
- LaTanya Buck (consultant), Director of Center for Diversity & Inclusion
- Rudolph Clay, Head of Library Diversity Initiatives and Outreach Services and African & African American Studies Librarian
- Shannon Davis, Digital Projects Librarian
- Makiba J. Foster, Subject Librarian for American History, American Culture Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
- Meredith Evans, Associate University Librarian
- Chris Freeland, Associate University Librarian
- Nadia Gliaveck, Head of the Visual Media Research Lab
- Jennifer Kirmer, Digital Archivist
- Sonya Rooney, University Archivist
- Andrew Rouner, Director of Scholarly Publishing
- Rebecca Wanzo (faculty advisor), Associate Director for The Center of the Humanities
- Meah Zeller, Copyright Librarian

Getting the Word Out
- Variety of venues were used to publicize about and solicit content for Documenting Ferguson
  - Washington University news story
  - St. Louis NPR Interview
  - Missouri History Museum program “Documenting History: Artists Respond to Ferguson”
  - “Documenting Ferguson: Capturing History as it Happens” Archival Outlook November/December 2015 issue

Research and Class Use
- In-person research use of physical posters, fliers, and newspapers
  - Spring 2015 Sophomore Seminar group project — students interviewed university staff who live in Ferguson or surrounding communities
  - Interviews contributed to the Community Portal
  - Interviews added to the Washington University Archives Oral History Collection which includes interviews with alums, current/past faculty and staff regarding their experiences at WU

Moving Forward
- Continue to:
  - Capture websites through Archive-It
  - Seek contributions to the Community Portal
  - Collect physical material
  - Work with variety of faculty and students to use the collection for teaching and research

Community Portal
- Omeka-powered website with Contribution plugin
- Allows anyone to contribute content
- Terms and conditions to contribute:
  - Contributor must be creator of content
  - Contributor gives university permission to preserve, use, distribute, and reproduce content
  - Content approved by site administrators
- Content includes:
  - Stories; Images; Videos; Audio; Oral Histories

Physical Collection Material
- Collect, preserve, and make accessible physical material documenting the university community’s responses
- Examples of material:
  - Student group fliers and posters
  - Student newspaper articles covering Ferguson
  - Event fliers from university-hosted discussions

Archive-It
- Collaboration with Archive-It to solicit web content, news stories, blog posts, and social media that documented events in Ferguson
  - Over 100 links contributed directly from the Documenting Ferguson team
- Web content directly related to Washington University community captured on our own installation
- Archive-It expanded their collecting to include documentation of events across the country, not only in response to Ferguson, but also other “police-involved” shootings and related protests and events
- Links to contribute web content are included on the Omeka community portal

Photos courtesy of the Documenting Ferguson Project, digital.wustl.edu/ferguson